

**LISTING OF THE CLAIMS**

1. (Previously Presented) A drive apparatus for at least one of open-loop and closed-loop control of a safety-critical component, comprising:

a switching device including a first switch and a second switch, connected in series with the first, for switching the safety-critical component;

a first control device for reception of an input signal and emission of a first drive signal; and

a second control device for reception of the input signal and for emission of a second drive signal,

wherein the first switch in the switching device is drivable by the first control device and the second switch in the switching device is drivable by the second control device, wherein the first switch and the second switch are drivable with a time offset with respect to one another, and wherein the first and the second control device operate on the master/slave principle.

2. (Previously Presented) The drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first and the second switch are in each case a relay or a contactor.

3. (Previously Presented) The drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first and the second switch are in each case a semiconductor switch.

4. (Previously Presented) The drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the first and the second switch in each case comprise an optocoupler.

5. (Previously Presented) An electrical machine having a load circuit and a drive apparatus as claimed in claim 1.

6. (Previously Presented) The electrical machine as claimed in claim 5, further comprising an emergency-off switch for supplying the input signal.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for at least one of open-loop and closed-loop control of a safety-critical component, the method comprising:

provisioning a switching device including a first switch and a second switch, connected in series with the first, for switching the safety-critical component;

provisioning a first control device, connected to the switch, and of a second control device connected to the second switch;

receiving an input signal;

emitting a first drive signal from the first control device to the first switch in the switching device on the basis of the input signal; and

emitting a second drive signal from the second control device to the second switch in the switching device on the basis of the input signal, wherein the first and the second drive signal are emitted with a time offset with respect to one another, and wherein the first and the second drive signal are produced using a master/slave process as a function of the input signal, thus resulting in the defined time offset.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the switching device is used to switch a load circuit of an electrical machine.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the input signal is

produced by an emergency-off switch.

10.-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Previously Presented)     The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the input signal is  
produced by an emergency-off switch.